

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SY-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 SYE-00

TRSE-00 EA-07 COME-00 EB-08 LAB-04 SIL-01 MCT-01

CCO-00 OC-06 OPR-02 A-01 FBO-02 OMB-01 /088 W

-----200758Z 021597 /14

O 200705Z APR 77

FM AMCONSUL KARACHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1638

INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL LAHORE IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L KARACHI 1865

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ASEC, PINT, PK

SUBJECT: SECURITY SITUATION IN KARACHI

1. THE PAKISTAN LABOR ALLIANCE HAS CALLED A NATION-WIDE STRIKE OF INDEFINITE DURATION BEGINNING APRIL 20 IN SUPPORT OF PNA DEMANDS. THE PNA HAS ENDORSED THE STRIKE. KNOWN AS "WHEEL JAMMER," CONNOTING THE INTENTION TO STOP ALL WHEELS FROM TURNING, THE STRIKE IN KARACHI IS ALMOST COMPLETELY EFFECTIVE AND IS BEING ENFORCED BY MOBS ERECTING BARRICADES, THROWING STONES AT PASSING VEHICLES AND EVEN BLOCKING BICYCLE TRAFFIC. AS OF MID-MORNING THE DRIGH ROAD ROUTE TO THE AIRPORT CANNOT BE SAFELY NEGOTIATED BECAUSE OF TRASH IN THE ROAD AND MOBS AT SEVERAL POINTS. MEDICAL PERSONNEL, ELECTRICITY, GAS, TELEPHONES, POSTAL SERVICE AND NEWS MEDIA ARE SUPPOSED TO BE EXEMPTED FROM THE STRIKE. THE PHONE AND ELECTRIC UTILITIES ARE FUNCTIONING BUT WE UNDERSTAND THAT THEIR SERVICE PERSONNEL HAVE NOT REPORTED FOR WORK.

2. SCATTERED ATTEMPTS BY ARMY UNITS TO DISMANTLE

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BARRICADES AND TO CALM CROWDS HAVE BEEN OBSERVED, BUT GENERALLY SPEAKING NEITHER THE POLICE NOR THE ARMY HAVE YET TAKEN ANY SIGNIFICANT STEPS TO CLEAR THE ROADS OR PREVENT MOB INTERFERENCE WITH THE FLOW OF TRAFFIC. THEY SEEM TO BE AVOIDING PROVOCATIVE CONTACT. SHOPS ARE CLOSED AND ATTENDANCE AT OFFICES AND FACTORIES SPARSE. FOR ALL PRACTICAL PURPOSES THE

PORT IS NOT FUNCTIONING, PARTLY BECAUSE OF ABSENTEEISM AND PARTLY BECAUSE THE TRUCKERS ARE NOT MOVING GOODS UP COUNTRY.

3. PIA COCKPIT PERSONNEL ARE STILL ENGAGED IN "NON COOPERATION," IN EFFECT A STRIKE THAT HAS HALTED THE GREAT MAJORITY OF PIA FLIGHTS. AS OF NOW THE INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS OF OTHER AIRLINES ARE STILL OPERATING BUT CANCELLATIONS AND OVER-FLIGHTS ARE LIKELY LATER IN THE DAY UNLESS DRIGH ROAD IS CLEARED TO PERMIT PASSENGERS AND AIRLINE PERSONNEL TO REACH THE AIRPORT.

4. THE PPP HAS SCHEDULED TWO PROCESSIONS FOR APRIL 20. ONE IS A PROCESSION OF "FISHERMEN AND PEASANTS" TO BE LED BY SEVERAL SIND PARTY LEADERS THROUGH MALIR AND KORANGI. THE OTHER IS A PROCESSION OF PRO-PPP STUDENTS ROUTED THROUGH MAHMOODABAD. THE SEVERAL PNA PROCESSIONS SCHEDULED FOR TODAY DO NOT APPEAR TO BE ROUTED SO AS TO PRECIPITATE DIRECT CONFRONTATION WITH THE PPP PROCESSIONS, BUT THE POTENTIAL FOR INTER-PARTY CLASHES IS EVIDENT.

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